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# JAMES W. FANNIN, JR., IN THE TEXAS REVOLUTION

RUBY CUMBY SMITH

## CHAPTER III

### FANNIN AND THE MATAMOROS EXPEDITION

### *1. The Inauguration of the Expedition and the Quarrel Between the Governor and the Council*

Before noticing in detail Fannin's connection with the Matamoros Expedition, let us turn to the workings of the Provisional Government of Texas and consider how this expedition was inaugurated, and how because of it the Provisional Government failed completely and could not provide for the defence of Texas in the Campaign of 1836.[35]

Ever since the beginning of the Revolution, the Matamoros Expedition had had many advocates, especially in the Council of the Provisional Government. It will be recalled that the Consultation on adjourning had approved the plan for such an expedition,[36] and after the adjournment of the Consultation, the Council had urged it as the natural step, if the declarations of that body to restore the Constitution of 1824 and their promise to co-operate with the Mexican Liberals in an effort to overthrow the Centralists were to be regarded as sincere. P. Dimit, the commandant at Goliad, was one of the first to urge the government to consider the matter. In a letter[37] dated December 2, he says:

> If this [the expedition to Matamoros] or some other movement like this, is not adopted, which will enable us to hurl the thunder back in the very atmosphere of the enemy, drag *him,* and with him the war out of Texas, her resources and her blood must continue to flow, from the centre to the frontier. If this is done, the paralyzing effects, and the immediate calamities of war, will be greatly mitigated. The revenue of the port of Matamoros, now applied to support an unprovoked, unnatural, and unjust war, *against us,* would then be used in defraying the expense of the war, *against him.* . . .

[35]This section is mainly the summary of an article by W. Roy Smith, "The Quarrel between Governor Smith and the Council of the Provisional Government of Texas," in THE QUARTERLY, V, 269-346.

[36]Smith, as cited, THE QUARTERLY, V, 288.

[37]Foote, *Texas and the Texans,* II, 184-5.

Again, the adoption and *impetuous* execution of the plan here proposed, might enable us to barter the war off, for a speedy and honorable peace. The enemy, when he found it visited upon his head, and saw the lightning at a distance, might adopt effectual measures to protect himself against its consuming progress, by offering a compromise, on our own terms. And should he not do this, the presence of a victorious force in Matamoros, having General Zavala for a nominal leader, and a counter-revolutionizing flag, the liberal of all classes would immediately join us, the neutral would gather confidence, both in themselves and us, and the parasites of centralism in that section, would be effectually panic-struck and paralyzed. In this way, a respectable army might be immediately organized here, principally of materials to commence active operations on the interior.

The plan for the expedition had been warmly sanctioned by the volunteers around Bexar. Indeed, Yoakum says it originated there because of the representations of Dr. James Grant,[38] who planned it with the hope of obtaining aid of the Mexican Liberals. A letter of Grant's, widely published, represented that Acapulco, Guadalaxara, and Puebla, as well as Valladolid, Oajaca, Zacatecas, and Durango could be counted on in general as being opposed to Santa Anna, that Tamaulipas, and Nuevo Leon would rise the moment an attack was made on Matamoros, and that San Luis Potosi would instantly follow. Moreover, Yoakum states,[39] that on November 29, before the idea of storming Bexar got a hold in camp, Major Morris of the New Orleans Greys, a company of volunteers recently arrived from the United States, informed Houston that about two hundred and twenty-five men had determined to set out the next morning from Bexar for Matamoros and the interior of Mexico. These men, he said, were nearly all from the United States. He further stated that they would be joined by one hundred and fifty more men, then on their way from the United States, and that in the end their force would consist of from 5,000 to 8,000 men, who were awaiting them; furthermore,

[38]Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 184-5.
Grant was a wealthy Scotchman owning extensive estates in Parras in Coahuila. In connection with Dr. J. C. Beales he had attempted to settle a colony of eight hundred families between the Nueces and the Rio Grande rivers. His colony had been abandoned in 1834. He was an active Federalist and had been a member of the legislature of Coahuila and Texas when that body was dispersed by Cos. He was opposed to a declaration of independence by the Texans, and possibly for selfish reasons wished Texas to remain a part of Mexico.

[39]Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 23.

that if they were disappointed in marching to Matamoros, they would return to the United States. Concerning these two letters, Johnson says[40] that Dr. Grant's letter was a private one, which got into print, and that nothing of the contents of Morris's letter was publicly known in the army before Bexar.

Be that as it may, certainly after the successful storming of Bexar and the enforced retreat of Cos (December 5-15), the Matamoros fever seized the volunteers in earnest, and the Matamoros Expedition seemed more feasible than ever. The majority of these soldiers were from the United States, and other volunteers from the United States were constantly coming in, eager to fight the Mexicans. Since there were no Mexicans in Texas to fight, and since no plan of campaign had as yet been definitely arranged, it seemed all out of reason to these undisciplined fighters to sit idly in camp for a month or two, waiting for a Mexican army to attack them before they should have the opportunity of fighting. Hence it was that the Matamoros Expedition, which would give them immediate fighting and something to look forward to, appealed to them so strongly.

The objects of this expedition have been variously stated, but perhaps no one has expressed them so concisely as has John Sowers Brooks,[41] Adjutant of the Georgia Volunteers, when the expedition was actually under way. He says:

> The objects of this expedition appear to me to be not a systematic invasion of Mexico, but primarily to give employment to the volunteers and lastly to secure, if practicable, a foothold in Mexico, to carry the war out of Texas and to sustain ourselves

[40]His statement is copied in Wooten (editor), *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I, 195-6.

[41]John Sowers Brooks was born in Virginia in 1814. He had served in the United States Marine Corps for eleven months before coming to Texas to fight in the Revolution. Shortly after landing at Velasco, December 20, 1835, he was made adjutant of the Georgia Battalion of Permanent Volunteers, and accompanied that battalion when it started from Velasco under Fannin to undertake the Matamoros Expedition. The expedition got no further than Goliad, and Brooks was there during the trying six weeks the volunteers held that fort. In February, 1836, he resigned his position as adjutant and became aide to Fannin. He was also chief engineer, and had charge of the ammunition and artillery. His letters covering the dates December 23, 1835,-March 10, 1836, published in THE QUARTERLY, IX, 157-209, are valuable in that they give us an accurate contemporary picture of the ill-fated Matamoros Expedition.

upon the enemies means until a more formidable and better concerted plan of invasion can be arranged.[42]

Practically all the military leaders had favored the Matamoros Expedition when it was first proposed. It will be recalled that the report of the committee recommending the expedition to the Consultation declared that Austin thought that such an expedition would cripple the enemy and distract his movements. Down to the eve of his departure to the United States, Austin, it seems, took the expedition as a matter of course. In a letter written on December 22, 1835, to the Council, he, however, expressed himself as opposed to Texas sending an invading force against Matamoros except in the capacity of auxiliary troops, so as to keep the Federalist party from turning against the Texans. "General Mexia," he says, "ought to have commanded the expedition against Matamoros and only waited to be asked by the Provisional Government to do so."[43]

Governor Smith and General Houston at first approved the plan of the expedition, and on December 17, 1835, Houston, in obedience to the orders of Governor Smith, had directed James Bowie, in case he could obtain the services of a sufficient number of men for the purpose, to proceed to Matamoros, reduce the place, and retain possession until further orders.[44] There was some delay, however, in Bowie's receiving this order, and its provisions were not carried out.

Meanwhile, the Council had warmly been favoring the expedition and making their own plans with regard to it. Having been advised[45] by Governor Smith to keep the volunteers actively and profitably employed, they determined to use these troops in effecting the Matamoros Expedition. As a preliminary step, they began to ascertain the views of many of the leading volunteer officers concerning the proposed expedition. In the Lamar Papers there are preserved the views of two of these officers, Travis and Frank W. Johnson. In a private letter to the lieutenant-governor, in which he declined the appointment of major in the artillery and recommended Frank W. Johnson for the place, Travis declared

[42]THE QUARTERLY, IX, 175.

[43]Brown *History of Texas*, I, 463-5.

[44]Houston to Bowie, Yoakum, *History of Texas*, II, 454.

[45]Broadsides, *Address to the People of Texas by the Council*, January 12, 1836. *Lamar Papers.*

that he intended to join the expedition if one were gotten up, unless prohibited by superior orders, adding, however, that he would execute to the best of his ability any command which the Council might see proper to confer on him.[46]

Frank W. Johnson[47] wrote that he had long been interested in such an expedition, but pointed out the necessity of having at least five hundred men to undertake it. In the meantime, he thought that the necessary preparations, as regards stores, ammunition, artillery, etc., could be made. Matamoros, he said, had only two hundred soldiers, very little inclined to support the cause of centralism or to oppose the favorers of federalism. A premature movement to throw off the yoke had already been attempted by the people there; big parties of enemies were reported at Laredo and Rio Grande; and now that the present intentions of the Council were known, a large number of Mexican Federals would join the Texans. "The movement," he declared,

> is appropriate and should not be lost, and you may rely on my joining it with every soldier that can be spared. . . . The discipline already established in the volunteer army will render us doubly formidable, and if we are not interfered with by the officers of the regular army (according to the provisions of the Gen'l Council in the decree establishing the regular army) you can rely on all going well and to your wishes.
>
> Volunteers arriving from the U. S. declare that they will immediately quit us if we pretend to independence, as they consider the war in that case interminable. They also are in favor of offensive measures.

On the same day that Johnson wrote this letter, the committee on military affairs in the council, having had under consideration information in another letter[48] of Johnson's to the effect that the centralists were trying to unite all parties against the Texans by saying that they were "fighting for independence instead of for liberty and the Constitution," as well as other information regarding the plans of the Mexican army, urged Governor Smith to undertake a speedy concentration of troops on the frontier. They recommended that J. W. Fannin be ordered to the west to take command of the regular and auxiliary troops; that Travis be ordered to the frontier

[46]Travis to Robinson, December 17, 1835. *Lamar Papers.*

[47]Johnson to Robinson, December 25, 1835. *Lamar Papers.*

[48]THE QUARTERLY, V, 313.

with all the troops he could bring under his command; and that general defensive or offensive operations be begun at once, either from Copano or San Patricio. They further resolved that no officer of the regular army of Texas should receive pay until he was in actual service under the orders of the commander-in-chief.

In thus advising the commander-in-chief to undertake the Matamoros Expedition, the Council acted according to its rights;[49] but Houston hesitated about undertaking the expedition, both because of the necessity of his occupying a central position, and because his presence was unnecessary "where a subordinate could discharge every duty."

Though it is undoubtedly true that Houston hesitated for the reasons above stated; yet for still other reasons he was loath to go. The fact is that the feeling for independence had begun to seize strongly on the people of Texas,[50] and since the success of the Matamoros Expedition would bind Texas closer to Mexico, Houston was unwilling to obey the wishes of the Council in the matter.

While Houston was hesitating about obeying the orders of the Council concerning the expedition, Johnson came from Bexar to San Felipe, and on January 3 reported to the Council that, under the authority of a letter directed to his predecessor, General Burleson, he had already ordered the expedition, and that the troops had chosen him to lead it. He now asked the Council to grant him authority to make the expedition,—which they promptly did, taking steps also to purchase two vessels, the *William Robbins* and the *Invincible,* to co-operate with him.

On January 6, however, Johnson declined to take part in the expedition, presumably because of the violent opposition of Governor Smith. The next day he again changed his mind and determined to make it.

Meanwhile, both Fannin's and Johnson's views on the subject having been obtained, in consequence of Johnson's declining to act as agent, Fannin was appointed. His powers were extensive. He was to raise, collect, and concentrate at or as near the Port of Copano as convenience or safety would admit all volunteer troops willing to enter into an expedition against Matamoros, wherever they might be found, at the mouth of the Brazos, the city of Bexar,

[49]THE QUARTERLY, V, 315.

[50]Yoakum, *History of Texas,* II, 47.

or elsewhere, whether in Texas or arriving in Texas; and when the volunteers were thus collected and concentrated, he was to report either to the commanding general, or to the Governor and Council, as he might prefer, agreeably to the seventh section of the ordinance and decree of December 5, 1836, which provided for the raising of an auxiliary corps to the regular army; and he was to continue to report from time to time as the expedition progressed. He was authorized to call upon Thomas F. McKinney, the general agent of the commissary department, or any public agent, storekeeper, or supplying officer of the government, for munitions of war, provisions and transportation; to negotiate a loan of three thousand dollars at not more than ten per cent interest; to hold an election for a commander and other officers, agreeably to the law regulating the auxiliary and volunteer corps. After he had concentrated the troops, he was authorized to make a descent upon Matamoros, if he deemed it practicable, to take Matamoros, or such other point or points or places, as he thought proper; and he was empowered to appoint agents as he thought necessary to aid in the accomplishment of his object, and to delegate to such agents powers not inconsistent with his own powers.[51]

The Council, now learning of Johnson's determination to make the expedition, again conferred the authority on him, but did not take away Fannin's authority. Houston claimed that he was being superseded in command, and Governor Smith, anxious perhaps to forestall the Council, ordered him to the front, for which place he left on January 8, 1836.

The culmination of the quarrel between the Governor and Council was brought on by a report made to Houston by Lieutenant Colonel Neill, whom Johnson had left in charge of Bexar. This report told of the miserable condition of the garrison at that place, stating that the volunteers on leaving had taken with them all available supplies. Houston sent the report to Governor Smith, who, on reading it, was beside himself with rage. On January 10, he sent a message to the Council which contained the most violent language, declaring that the condition of the garrison at Bexar called forth the indignant feelings of every honest man. He characterized the Matamoros Expedition as a predatory expedition, disorganizing in its nature and ruinous in its effects. He

[51]THE QUARTERLY, V, 316-322.

referred to a portion of the Council as "Judases," "scoundrels," "wolves," and "parracides," stating that a convention had been called that would afford a sovereign remedy to their vile machinations. He likewise declared that unless they made to the world the necessary acknowledgment of their error, "furnishing expenses to give circulation and publicity" to the same, that their body would be adjourned till March 1, and that he would continue to discharge his duties as commander-in-chief of the army and navy and see that the laws were executed.

The Council next day adopted resolutions to the effect that they were the "immediate representatives of a sovereign people" and that they would sustain the dignity of the government. They then deposed the Governor, and preferred certain charges and specifications against him. Later in the day, they swore in Lieutenant Governor Robinson as "acting governor of Texas."

Thus the breach between the Governor and Council was complete. Robinson sent in his first message on January 14, strongly urging the prosecution of the war against the Centralists and the immediate reduction of Matamoros.[52]

But just at this juncture some of the Council members were anxious to join the army, and foreseeing that their body would be left without a quorum, they provided for two standing committees to act in place of the Council, and they likewise conferred certain powers on the acting governor in case no quorum should be present. The committees were the Finance Committee, and the Advisory Committee to assist the governor in his duties. After January 17 there was really no quorum present, and from that time till March 1, Texas was left in "doubt and uncertainty as to the existence of any legal and responsible authority or any acknowledged source of power." Houston still addressed his official communications to Governor Smith and the garrison at Bexar sided with Smith, but the volunteers under Fannin and Johnson sided mainly with the Council. Each faction surfeited the public with explanations, but the people in general took but little interest in the matter.[53] Even the most tragic appeals of Fannin subsequently failed to rouse them, and the Mexicans were upon them before they realized their situation.

[52]THE QUARTERLY, V, 321-334.

[53]THE QUARTERLY, V, 335.

Thus was the Matamoros Expedition the occasion of the failure of the Provisional Government of Texas, and thus because of it was the defence of Texas paralyzed. Though it is true that the action of Governor Smith and General Houston broke up the expedition, yet the western outposts were not abandoned, and it required little military skill on the part of the Mexicans to capture them. Commenting on the Matamoros Expedition, Garrison says:[54]

What the result of a little more energy directed that way would have been remains among the untried issues. There are some who believe that it would have been effective only in dividing and weakening the Texas forces; but others are of the opinion that if the invading Mexicans had been met with the whole strength of Texas and with the spirit afterwards displayed in the Alamo, they would never have reached the Anglo-American settlements after all.

### 2. *The First Month of the Matamoros Expedition*

Fannin proceeded to his work as agent for the Provisionel Government with energy and enthusiasm. On January 9, he published in the *Telegraph and Texas Register* an appeal for all volunteers who felt disposed to keep the war out of Texas and cripple the resources of the enemy at home to rendezvous at San Patricio between the 24th and the 27th of January and to report to the officer in charge.

On January 10, Johnson issued a like proclamation, urging "all friends of freedom of whatever name or nation" to join him in marching under the Flag of 1824. The first attack he declared would be on Matamoros, and it was expected that the whole volunteer army of Texas would take up the line of march from San Patricio between the 25th and 30th of January.

Commenting on the fact that the command of the expedition had been given to two officers instead of to one, Smith says:[55]

Two ambitious officers, neither of whom was subordinate to the other, could hardly be expected to act with that harmony necessary to insure the success of such an undertaking. The expedition may, in a manner, then, be said to have been a failure from the very beginning.

[54]Garrison, *Texas*, 204.

[55]THE QUARTERLY, V, 321.

Be that as it may; yet from the general tone of Johnson's letters preserved in the Lamar Papers, as well as from later statements[56] of Johnson and of Reuben R. Brown, a survivor of the expedition, it seems that Fannin and Johnson had, at least, some friendly understanding. Fannin, in his letter to Robinson and the Council on February 7, 1836, referred to the division under Johnson as the "Advance Division of the Volunteer Army."

Leaving out of the discussion the question of the wisdom of attempting the expedition, it is doubtful whether, starting when they did, the volunteers would ever have succeeded in taking Matamoros, not only because of the early appearance in that region of the Mexican general Urrea, who, fully informed of their movements, possessed sufficient forces and equipment to block any progress they might make, but also because of the active personal opposition of General Houston among them.

On January 15, 1836, only eight days after Fannin was authorized to undertake the expedition, Santa Anna at his place of rendezvous at Saltillo,[57] had notice of it, and at once dispatched General Urrea to Matomoros to begin operations along the coast to Lipantitlan.[58] Urrea found a decided sentiment for the Constitution of 1824 in Tamaulipas, but his presence in that province lessened the ardor of the Mexicans for it.[59] His force consisted of both cavalry and infantry, and it is estimated at from 500 to a thousand.[60] His troops reached Matamoros on January 31, where they remained till February 17.

In the meantime the volunteers had begun assembling in the neighborhood of Copano, the rendezvous proposed by Houston for

[56]Baker, *Texas Scrap Book*, 81; Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 545.

[57]Urrea, *Diario*, 6.

[58]Lipantitlan was a small fort on the Nueces, which had been captured by the Texan volunteers under Captain Westover early in November, 1835, shortly after the capture of Goliad by Dimit.—Linn, John J., *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas*, 118-22.

[59]*Diario*, 7. He says: "The inhabitants of the northern villages from Matamoros as far as Guerrero showed themselves decidedly in favor of the Constitution of 1824, and believing that the colonies sympathized with them, they kept in touch with them and were ready to take up arms and join the cause. I took every opportunity to keep them peaceable, giving them to understand what the real intentions of these colonists were. So I managed to keep them quiet."

[60]Urrea states in his *Diario* that his force numbered 550 men, and that he left 200 of these in Matamoros to march later. *Diario*, 7. Potter declares that he counted from 900 to 1000 in Urrea's division. Linn, John, J., *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas*, 129.

the descent on Matamoros. At Goliad there had been stationed a small company of regulars since Dimit seized that post in October, 1835. Colonel Grant, who with two hundred volunteers left San Antonio on December 30, 1835,[61] reached Goliad a week later. There he experienced some trouble in getting supplies from Dimit, who had "hoisted the flag of independence";[62] but Dimit finally gave him provisions for a three months' campaign. General Houston, accompanied by Bowie, G. W. Hockley and other officers, arriving a few days later, a general parade was ordered for the purpose of reorganizing the troops and explaining to them the orders of the Provisional Government. Houston's address completely defeated the object of Grant, and next day Grant's troops marched with Houston to Refugio, where Houston went for the purpose of dissuading Colonel Ward's men from the expedition.[63]

The arrival of Johnson at Refugio on January 20 with the resolutions of the General Council authorizing the expedition greatly angered Houston, and he at once addressed the soldiers there, denouncing the expedition.[64] He recognized in it the intention to supersede him,[65] and believing that if he remained with the army the evils which might befall the expedition would be ascribed to him, he immediately returned to Washington, and on January 28 obtained a furlough from Governor Smith till March 1.

Colonel Ward's men had not arrived at Refugio, but Houston's speech made such a profound impression on the volunteers who were there that many of them abandoned the expedition entirely, leaving Johnson and Grant with only from 60 to 70 men.[66] These

[61]Statement of Johnson to Council, January 3.

[62]Statement of Captain W. G. Cooke furnished Lamar in 1840. *Lamar Papers.*

[63]Houston to Smith, January 17, 1836, Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 527. Colonel Ward, it will be remembered, was colonel of the Georgia volunteers whom Fannin had welcomed into Texas in December, 1835. Ward was later major of the Georgia Battalion of Permanent Volunteers, when they were stationed at Goliad.

[64]Baker, *Texas Scrap Book*, 81. Houston declared that the expedition was both unwise and unauthorized.

[65]Houston to Smith, January 30, 1836. Yoakum, *History of Texas*, I, 460-470.

[66]Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 517, says 64. Urrea states that he killed 16 at San Patricio and captured 24 and that Grant's men numbered in all 41 killed and six captured, making 87 with Johnson and Grant. *Diario*, 9-10. Captain Cooke's statement is that they did not have over 75.

retired to San Patricio, where they remained till Fannin arrived at Refugio.

While these efforts were being directed against the expedition, Fannin was proceeding to his undertaking with all possible haste. On January 21, 1836, only three days after the schedule time as announced in his call to the volunteers,[67] he wrote the governor and council that if the weather permitted their crossing the bar, he hoped to embark about two hundred and fifty of the Georgia Battalion of Permanent Volunteers at Velasco for Copano.[68] These, he reported, were only a part of his force, for at Matagorda there were "near 100" more under Captain Shakleford.[69] He had sent forward officers to get teams and carts to transport the camp equipage to the place of rendezvous at San Patricio, and now he urged the sending of provisions and volunteers to Copano. He also called attention to the fact that Galveston Island and Pass Caballo should be fortified with the cannon already on hand, and said that volunteers for this express purpose should be raised, declaring that it was folly to expect such work to be accomplished by regulars,[70] and adding: "You may rely upon it that we will not have 1000 of them in Texas by May—and if this expedition prospers as contemplated, you need not desire it."

In this letter he also expressed a willingness to serve under General Houston, if that officer would obey the wishes of the Council.

The expedition started on January 24,[71] and on the fourth day of February debarked at Copano. The next day they marched to Refugio.

[67]Fannin had trouble in securing boats; but finally engaged the *Columbus* and the *Flora*. He himself went on the *Invincible*.

[68]The number is not exact. In his letter of January 28, he stated that he had about 200.

[69]Fannin to the Governor and Council, January 21, 1836. *Lamar Papers*.

Shackleford was a physician from Courtland, Alabama, who collected a company of about sixty men, and came to Texas to fight in the Revolution. He landed at Matagorda in the latter part of January, 1836, but did not go by boat to Copano with Fannin, as Fannin expected. Instead, he went overland to Goliad, by the way of Texana and Victoria, reaching Goliad on February 12. He surrendered with the other volunteers on the retreat from Goliad, but his life was spared because he was a physician. He had a son, however, who was massacred.

[70]The number of "regulars" at no time during the Revolution possibly exceeded one hundred men. THE QUARTERLY, IX, 235.

[71]J. S. Brooks to Mary Ann Brooks, March 4, 1836. THE QUARTERLY, IX, 3, 187.

On February 4, Fannin received most encouraging news from Johnson, who at San Patricio was awaiting his arrival to take up the line of march to the Rio Grande, regarding the troubles Santa Anna was experiencing in "centralizing" Mexico and the assistance which the Texans might expect from the Liberals. This news, which Fannin reported to the government, was to the effect that Colonel Gonzales had 240 men, Captain Placedore 47[72] and "some other Mexican officer some considerable force" all in wait for his advance on this side of the Rio Grande. In his letter to the government, Fannin also enclosed an extract from Johnson's letter,[73] which shows so clearly what the leaders of the expedition were relying on that it is not untimely to copy it in full. This extract also shows that Johnson and Fannin were co-operating.

By advices from Monterey of the 18 ult and from Matamoros of the 20th ult, I learn that Santa Anna was in Saltillo with 2300 men, and a good train of artillery—that on his imprudently advancing so far, the states of Zacatecas and Guadalajara, en mass, had taken to arms in his rear, and that the movement agst the Central Govt. was likely to become general throughout the nation. The troops which occupied Laredo have retired to Saltillo and Monclova—those at Rio Grande (town) tis supposed will likewise make a retrograde movement, and their number is by no means important in any case— Disaffection has crept into the arch tyrant's ranks— 20 to 30 men desert daily and tho Matamoros is almost without a garrison, he is afraid to send off assistance, lest they should revolt on leaving his camp. Our friends, the liberals of Tamaulipas, are arming in all quarters, and will form a most respectable addition to our force.

Everything looks most propitious, and unless our headstrong countrymen by a premature Declaration of Independence rouse the jealousy of the Federal party, victory is secured, and by this blow we may calculate overthrowing the Tyrant Santa Anna and his minions. The forces you have and those here and about 50 under Gonzales and Canales—together with the almost certain assistance we will receive from all parts of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon will prove sufficient to give the most important blow that has ever been struck in the Republic—and place Texas in a situation to dictate to the neighboring states. A small detachment of my division (20 men) under Colonel Grant took on the night of the 30 ult Capt. Rodriguez—this company (28 men) with all

[72]Fannin meant Placedo Benivides, alcalde of Victoria.

[73]Johnson to Fannin, February 2. *Lamar Papers.*

their horses (50) arms, and without the loss of a man—which leaves the road clear from Nueces to Rio Grande.

Matamoros is poorly supplied with troops—the friends are in power—I have reason to believe, that if a quick movement is made, not a shot will be fired—

Fannin also declared in his letter of February 4: "I shall proceed west and must beg of you to order the naval force to cooperate with me before Matamoros, between the 20 and 28. It is useless to urge the necessity, it is too apparent to require a second word."

On February 4, Fannin also made a list of his expenses to date. It is headed "Mend. of Dfts drawn on Provt Govt of Tex. for public service, for concentrating volunteers, etc., as pr. ordenance 7th Jany 1836." It is carefully itemized and shows that in addition to $2,000 received by Johnson, Fannin himself had spent about $2,000 in transporting the troops to Copano and in "pressing" supplies.[74]

[74] *Lamar Papers.*

"23d Jany 3000$ McKinney & Williams—for cash by them advanced at 10 prct pr anu $2000 recd by Col F W Johnson at San Felipe but all vouched for by me—

"23d Jany 1000 Schr Columbus & owners for freight & transportation of Volunteers from Velasco to Copano.

"23d Jany 30$ steamer Laura for towage of Flora over the Brazos Bar being part of the $500 charter for the run to Copano.

"3rd Feby $470 John Appleman, master of the sch Flora, for freight transportation of the volunteers to Copano.

"3rd Feby $446—Henry Foley, for Provisions pressed from Schr Flora.

"Independent of this I also pressed provisions belonging to Horton and Clements of Matagorda—a bill of which I forwd them—not placing any value on them. The bill will be [illegible]. I found the volunteers have not had a morsel of bread for two weeks also never had a public officer of the Govt. to attend to them—Under these circumstances I felt bound to provide the best way I could—and not knowing when another opportunity would offer—could not suffer the present to pass.

"4th Feby 1836.

"J. W. Fannin, Jr.
"Agt. Prot Govt."

In confirmation of the above memoranda, there are in the *Lamar Papers* copies of the invoices of the provisions pressed from the *Flora* and those consigned to Clements and Horton of Matagorda. There is also a receipt for $500 from John Appleman, master of the *Flora.*

"H & C [Horton & Clement] (Copy)

"Port of Copano Texas 1st Feby 1836

"I James W. Fannin Jr. Col Comt Artillery of the Regular Army of Texas and Agent of the Provisional Government of Texas do hereby testify that I have this day pressed and [taken] on board the Schr Flora Capt Appleman the following articles of Provisions for the use

Thus far even with the violent opposition of Governor Smith and of General Houston and with the delays attendant upon the transportation of the troops, the expedition had not fared badly; and the communications of its leaders are all hopeful. It is true that the expenses so far had been heavy. Besides the $2,000 which Johnson had received, Fannin himself had spent nearly $2,000 in getting the troops to Copano and in purchasing supplies, this amount being about $1,000 more than was originally granted for the expedition. Yet the volunteers were now in the neighborhood of San Patricio, and the distance of this rendezvous from Matamoros was about equal to twice that from Gonzales to San Antonio,

of the volunteers of the army of Texas with the marks as per margin To wit
23 Bbls Flour
1 do Bread
1 Tierce Rice 696 lbs—
3 Sacks Corn—

[In margin:] A Shepherd

"The above goods are consigned to Horton & Clements Matagorda which I [refer] to the provisional Government for payment on the presentation of this voucher. *Freight paid by me.*

"Given under my hand and seal the day and year above letter.

Seal "J. W. Fanning
"Col Comt and
"Agent Prol Govt—Texas."

"Recd 3d Feby Forty two Dollars full for freight of these goods.
"John Appleman Master of Flora."

(Copy)

"Port of Copano Texas 1st Feby 1836

"I James W Fanning, Jr Col Comt Artillery of the Regular Army of Texas and Agent of the Provisional Government of Texas do hereby certify that I have this day pressed and taken on board the Schr Flora Capt Appleman the following goods for the use of the volunteer army of Texas under my command with the marks as per margins and belonging to H. Foley to wit

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 20 Bbls Flour | $19 per Bbl | $380 |
| 8 Bbls Potatoes | 7 do | 56 |
| ½ Pike log Brandy 70 galls | $3 | 210 |
| | | $646 |

"On the above I have given a dft for $200 at sight on Mess. McKinney and Williams [illegible] being the balance of Amt they are due me out of the $3000 receipted for to defray the expenses of the expedition against Matamoras authorized by the Genl Council of Texas and the remainder of $440 for the draft on the Provl Govt of Texas which when paid will be in full.

"Given under my hand and seal

"J. W. Fanning Jr.
"Col Comt and Agt Provl Govt.

"Recd 3rd Feby 1836 from J. W. Fannin Jr one draft $200 on Mc-

a journey which the volunteers had accomplished in eight or nine days. Fannin, it will be recalled, had asked for the co-operation of the navy before Matamoros between the 20th and 28th. He thus proposed to complete the journey in from sixteen to twenty days. The factor that he seems not to have taken into consideration—and indeed all Texas neglected it—was the active preparations of the Mexicans. Though they had had information of the approach of the Mexicans weeks ahead of time, yet in their calculations they did not actually expect them till April.[75]

It will be recalled that Johnson and Grant had retired to San Patricio till Fannin should arrive at Refugio. Fannin arrived there on February 5,[76] and Johnson, after conferring with him, determined to proceed west for the purpose of getting horses.[77] Grant went with him. When about twenty miles from the Sal Colorado, their commands divided; Grant and Johnson pushed ahead, and Johnson retired to San Patricio. It was this "advance division of the volunteer army" that reported the first news of the Mexican forces on the Rio Grande and the Rio Frio and their determination to attack Goliad and Bexar simultaneously. Much alarmed, Fannin enclosed this information in a letter to the Governor and Council, which reached San Felipe on February 11 or 12. His letter is an impassioned appeal to the Texans to awake from their lethargy and at once to prepare to meet the foe on the

Kinley and Williams and one draft for $446.00 on the Treasury of the Provl Govt of Texas in payt of the above

"Henry Foley"

"Copano 3d Feby 1836

"Recd payt J W Fannin Jr. Agt Provl Govt of Texas the sum of Five Hundred dollars for freight and transportation of troops from Quintana to this port—thirty dollars for Steamer Laura, towage over the Brazos Bar—and four hundred and seventy dollars by Dft at sight on the Provl Govt of Texas—

"Also recd the sum of Forty two dollars in cash for freight on Twenty three Bbls flour—1 Tierce Rice and 3 sacks corn consigned to Horton and Clements and A Shephard, Matagorda which was pressed for public service

"John Appleman
"Master Sch Flora"

$500 Charter
$42 Freight of Goods.

[75]Linn, John J., *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas*, 124.

[76]John Sowers Brooks to Miss Mary Ann Brooks, March 4, 1836. THE QUARTERLY, IX, 187.

[77]Baker, *Texas Scrap Book*, 81.

threshold of Texas. Its high-flown style readily lent itself to publication. An extract from it reads:

> Not the least doubt should any longer be entertained by any friends of Texas, of the designs of Santa Anna to overrun the country, and expel or exterminate every white man within its borders. May I be permitted to ask of them in sober earnestness, "Why halt ye between two opinions?" Your soil is again to be polluted by the footsteps of the hirelings of an unprincipled despot! Will the freemen of Texas calmly fold their arms and wait till the approach of their deadly enemy compels them to protect their own firesides?[78]

In this letter Fannin also complained of the apathy of the Texans and the poor condition of the soldiers. He urged the civic militia as well as volunteers and friends from the United States to turn out, declaring that the forces in the field were insufficient to keep the enemy from the heart of the country. In view of the impending danger, he had ordered the artillery to be brought from San Patricio and the troops to be concentrated at Goliad, and declared that he would so dispose his forces as to sustain Bexar and Goliad and keep up communication with the colonies. He hastily added a postscript written on February 8, stating that at an election held on the 7th, he had been chosen colonel and Ward lieutenant-colonel of the expedition.

At Refugio Fannin was joined on his march to Goliad by Ticknor's company of about forty men from Alabama, and his troops now numbered about 250. At Goliad he found a few regulars, and here, too, he was joined by Shackleford and other volunteers, mainly from Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee. S. T. Brown[79]

[78]Fannin to Robinson.

[79]Baker, *Texas Scrap Book*, 242-5.

Following is the summary of Brown, showing what disposition was made of each company:

| | Company | Escaped | Detained | Killed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Duval's (1st Regiment Volunteers) | 1 | 5 | 38 |
| 2. | King's (Auxiliary Volunteers) | 2 | 0 | 20 |
| 3. | Pettus' (San Antonio Grays) | 2 | 5 | 32 |
| 4. | Bullock's (1st Regiment Tex. Volunteers) | 9 | 2 | 26 |
| 5. | Winn's (1st Reg. Tex. Volunteers) | 1 | 0 | 37 |
| 6. | Wadworth's (1st. Reg. Tex. Vols.) | 4 | 1 | 20 |
| 7. | Ticknor's (1st. Reg. Tex. Vols.) | 3 | 0 | 36 |
| 8. | Wyatte's (Louisville Vols.) | 1 | 1 | 26 |
| 9. | Westover's (San Patricio Co. Reg. Army) | 2 | 0 | 42 |
| 10. | Burke's (Mobile Grays) | 3 | 3 | 28 |
| 11. | Shackelford's (Red Rovers) | 3 | 3 | 52 |
| 12. | Horton's (Cavalry) | 3 | 0 | 7 |

in 1839 estimated Fannin's total force to have been 475. Fannin, however, on February 28,[80] declared that his garrison consisted of about 420 men.

Thus we leave Fannin at the end of the first month, in spite of difficulties, fairly on the way to the accomplishment of his purpose, but with the knowledge that the Mexican Centralists had taken every precaution to block his expedition. His funds were exhausted, though he had considerable provisions; now for the lack of sufficient plan, discipline, and organization he was compelled to desist from his purpose, at least for a time. He had chosen Goliad for his headquarters, because he considered it advantageously located[81] as a depot of supplies and reinforcements. It commands Aransas and Matagorda Bays, and had at that time overland communication with the colonies through Victoria, being thirty miles from the latter place. Fannin located his own depot of supplies on Lavaca Bay at Cox's and Dimit's Points, possibly because these landings were between him and the enemy and also because they were less accessible to the enemy than was Copano.

### *3. The Second Month of the Expedition (February 9 to March 9)*

The events of the second month indicate the speedy failure of the expedition. Thrown on his own resources and left to act for himself, Fannin seems to have realized his inability to command; and, thoroughly convinced that help need not be expected from the Mexicans and that his force was too small to meet the large Mexican force now in the field, to have desired to retreat from Goliad. Advised not to make a retrograde movement,[82] he felt that there was nothing to do but await the approach of the Mexicans. His letters of this month picture the desperate condition in which he found himself. His belief that General Houston by giving up other considerations and devoting himself entirely to the military, would answer the present emergency; his pleadings for men, provisions, and ammunition; his knowledge that Santa Anna could regain by one week's work or even one day's work the advantage the Texans had so miraculously gained in the for-

[80]Fannin to Mims, February 28, 1836. *Lamar Papers.*

[81]John Sowers Brooks to Miss Mary Ann Brooks, February 24, 1836. THE QUARTERLY, IX, 178.

[82]Advisory Committee (D. C. Barrett, Chairman) to Fannin, February 15, 1835. *Lamar Papers.*

mer campaign; his advice with regard to repelling the Mexican invasion; the troubles he experienced with his men and with Mexican spies; and the uncertainty of his own position, are the subjects of his communications to the Governor and Council during this month of waiting.

It is well, however, before going into Fannin's experiences this month to notice the orders he received from the government and to tell of the destruction of Johnson's and Grant's forces, since these had a vital influence on his actions during this month. Though no quorum was present in the Council after January 17, it will be recalled that several committees had been appointed to act in the capacity of the Council in the absence of a quorum. It is evident from their communications that both the Advisory Committee of the Council and the acting governor himself were unwilling to give up the expedition and intended that Fannin should accomplish it. Uncertainty of communication prevented their getting exact knowledge of the Mexican movements, and lack of men, as well as inexperience in directing them, prevented their forming sensible plans to counteract these movements; yet in all their letters to Fannin during the month, the one thing always urged was the accomplishment of the expedition. They did not realize the nearness of the Mexican approach, and were over-sanguine regarding aid to be expected from the militia. They also expected aid from the United States.

Two letters were written by Acting Governor Robinson to Fannin on February 13. In one of these he promised that one-third the militia would be ordered to Fannin's support and that information of his situation would be sent to the United States. Fannin was given authority to act for himself; yet it was desired that he maintain Refugio if possible, as well as fortify and defend Bexar and Goliad. The Reserve Army, it was proposed, would occupy Gonzales and some point on the Lavaca. Fannin was advised not to risk too much in battle. The government possessed no money, he was told, yet all the means in their power would be placed at his disposal. In the second letter, from information received from San Antonio, Robinson expressed a belief that the enemy would not attack Bexar or Goliad, but would likely throw reinforcements into Matamoros. Therefore, Fannin was advised to keep in mind the object of the campaign and to dash

on Matamoros as soon as in his opinion it was prudent to do so.[83]

On February 15 the Advisory Committee of the Council declared that the advices from the interior were not of such a definite nature as to require a retrograde movement on the part of Colonel Fannin or any of the troops designed for the Matamoros Expedition, especially since the forces at Bexar had considerably increased and the militia and volunteers were directed to the western frontier. They believed that there were forces enough to maintain Bexar and Goliad independent of those first designed for the Matamoros Expedition; so they advised Colonel Fannin to maintain Copano and if possible San Patricio until the movements of the enemy were ascertained, "when circumstances must govern the movements of the commander, which if possible should be directed toward the accomplishment of the expedition."[84]

On February 22, this Advisory Committee, believing from the communication of Fannin of February 14 that Urrea was further off than anticipated and that the Texans would have time to organize and that Fannin would receive sufficient aid for his need, urged Robinson to press on Fannin the great necessity of a speedy march forward as soon as his force and circumstances would permit, in order to obtain the object of the expedition.

All these orders were given before the Council knew of the actual plan of the Mexican campaign. Fannin himself did not learn definitely of it until February 16, and at once he informed the Council of it; but that body adjourned on February 16,[85] and so did not issue any more orders to him. Yet Fannin felt himself bound to follow the last order received. Nothing more clearly indicates Fannin's submission to authority than his determination to maintain his position at Goliad and not retreat till he received orders to abandon the place.

With regard to the forces of Johnson and Grant, it will be recalled that they had retired to San Patricio; and after conferring with Fannin, had gone to collect horses for the expedition. Together they had gone to within twenty or thirty miles of Sal Colorado, and had captured enough horses to mount perhaps one hundred men. Here, contrary to Johnson's judgment, they divided their forces, Grant and Morris going after more horses, while

[83]Robinson to Fannin, February 13, 1836. *Lamar Papers.*

[84]Signed Barrett, Thompson, Clements, and Patillo. *Lamar Papers.*

[85]Smith, Governor Smith and the Council, THE QUARTERLY, V, 335.

Johnson retired to San Patricio. It was their plan to unite and join Fannin in Goliad.[86] This was during the first week in February. R. R. Brown, a survivor of Grant's party, states that they had secured several hundred horses and had returned to San Patricio, and had started on another expedition about February 19. They again captured a considerable number of horses and were again returning to San Patricio.

Meanwhile, on February 27, Johnson's party at San Patricio had been unexpectedly attacked by Urrea, who, it will be remembered, had begun his march on February 17 from Matamoros to Lipantitlan. All were killed or captured except Johnson himself and four of his men. Johnson tells us quite frankly that he had no sentinels posted, because he considered himself secure with Grant's force in the rear, and because of the unusual cold. He, too, believed that the Mexicans were experiencing too much trouble to have advanced so far in their march on Texas.[87]

After destroying Johnson's force, Urrea began to look for Grant's men. On March 2, Grant passed Agua Dulce, about twenty miles from San Patricio, and was there attacked by the Mexicans under Urrea and Garay. Urrea says that forty-one were killed besides Grant and that six prisoners were taken, in addition to arms, ammunition, and horses. R. R. Brown, who wrote an account of the expedition, states that he was the sole survivor.

The destruction of this "advance division of the volunteer army" had a most depressing effect on the soldiers at Goliad, presaging the destruction of the entire force under Fannin. Writing of it, John Sowers Brooks says:[88] "The war is to be one of extermination. Each party seems to understand that no quarters are to be given or asked." Of Grant's destruction he wrote, "Up to this time they have uniformly killed every American they take, and it is reasonable, therefore, to infer that not one of that ill fated party survived."

Johnson's defeat was also one of the factors that prevented the Americans from carrying aid to Travis in the Alamo. Fannin's men were actually on their way to San Antonio, but were finding

[86]Johnson in Baker's *Texas Scrap Book*, 81.

[87]Johnson to Fannin, February 9, 1836. *Lamar Papers.*

[88]John Sowers Brooks to Mrs. A. H. Brooks, March 2, 1836. THE QUARTERLY, IX, 183.

it almost impossible to proceed for want of horses or oxen to transport their baggage and artillery. While debating on their situation, a messenger informed them of Johnson's defeat and of the Mexican intention to attack their depot of supplies, and this hastened their decision to return to Goliad and maintain that place, if possible.[89] They would likely have gone at the second appeal of Travis, but for the news of Grant's destruction.

Let us now return to Fannin. On February 9, Johnson sent the following letter to him and a copy of it to the government. This letter shows that Johnson had implicit faith, as well as possibly some tangible evidence, that the Mexicans around Matamoros would join him; and that if the expedition could have been speedily accomplished, when first planned, before the arrival of Urrea in the locality of Matamoros, it is difficult to conjecture what turn affairs might have taken. Vital Fernandez, mentioned in the letter, afterwards supplied Urrea with provisions for his march.

Feb. 9, 1836.

Dear Fannin,

It is of importance that you should be aware of the actual state of Matamoros more clearly than I can state in a public letter— to avoid mens names being bandied about while they are still in the power of the enemy. If a force from 3 to 400 men is sent against Matamoros, Vital Fernandez, who commands with 800 Taumalipas troops, will immediately join you— And the whole of the frontier towns will immediately follow

. . . [Illegible] for the purpose of acquiring essential information and not inciting suspicion has gone for a few days to Saltillo to visit Santa Ana. He will be back to Monterey ere this— Time is precious, and not a moment should be lost. Fear nothing for Bexar or Goliad or any point of Texas if an attack is made on Matamoros. The enemy will be compelled to change his plan of attack and we will maintain the war in his own territory with his own means with every advantage on our side. The true policy is to unite all your forces here, leaving a small force in Bexar and Goliad and proceed without delay into the interior.— with 150 or 200 men I will engage to keep Santa Anna's partizans in play from the town of Rio Grande to Requeta, cut off any reinforcements he may send to the coast and leave you this possession of Matamoras and even Tampico if necessary without his being able to send aid to those points. I can raise the whole country agst him and then the interior must move so as to compel him to a retrograde movement. Your Congress must be kept active

[89]John Sowers Brooks in THE QUARTERLY, IX, 183, 188, 191, 184, 189.

to prevent any reinforcements by sea and then you play a perfectly sure game. [Haste] in your present movements will prove the salvation of Texas. Delays at all times are dangerous but more particularly so in this movement. All depends upon you and I feel [that] you will warmly enter on your preparations and advance.

By a letter recd in Mier on the . . . [illegible] ult. from a person of credit in Saltillo it appears that movements in the state of Guadalajara and Zacetecas agst Santa Ana were likely to induce him to return incognito to the interior, leaving the command of the army to Gen'l Filisola. If disproving comes from collateral . . . [illegible] it appears possible, it will [amount] to a victory for us. Filisola is an old woman—Santa will not retire unless [everything] is in a serious uproar.[90]

How this letter affected Fannin we are unable to judge. Certainly nowhere in his letters do we find a suggestion that he ever intended to send any of his men to reinforce Johnson, or that he ever intended to advance on Matamoros, after he heard of Urrea's arrival in that region; and whatever faith he personally had in Mexican aid was dispelled soon after his arrival in Goliad. On February 16, he reported to the governor and council the information of the Mexican advance, as had been given him by Mr. Pantallion and Mr. Kuykendall, who had arrived in Goliad only five days from Matamoros. This information was accurate, and Fannin advised the council on measures he considered necessary to check the Mexican advance. With regard to the Mexicans, he said: "Go ahead—rely on yourselves, and the arms of your men. No aid need be expected from Mexicans."[91]

On arriving at Goliad, Fannin set about to make the place "tenable for a reasonable force." The situation of the mission on a rocky elevation overlooking the San Antonio River was regarded as the best in the region in which to make a stand against the Mexicans. The mission plant is located on a square covering about three and one-half acres, and was then enclosed by a stone wall from eight to ten feet high.[92] On the south and west of this enclosure were the barracks for the soldiers, and at the northeast corner was the church, a solid stone structure containing several small rooms in addition to the auditorium proper. The flat roof

[90]Johnson to Fannin, February 9, 1836. *Lamar Papers.*

[91]Fannin to Governor and Council, Foote II, 210-12.

[92]Bernard, Fannin at Goliad in Wooten's *A Comprehensive History of Texas,* I, 613.

of this church commanded a good view of the prairies for miles around.

The walls were strengthened: two trenches four feet apart were dug around them; and twelve small pieces of artillery placed to defend them.[93] A new block house was built, the old ones enlarged and strengthened, a masked battery was erected, and a covered way 200 yards long was made to connect the fort with the river, so as to secure water in case of emergency. "Only give us twenty days' time," wrote Fannin on February 14, "to perfect all the work laid out and then provisions for our stomachs, arms, and ammunitions, etc., and it will be no easy matter to take this place."[94]

The work was later completed, and the fort was named Fort Defiance. On March 10, while momentarily expecting the Mexican attack, John Sowers Brooks, the chief engineer, declared that with their 1,650 men it would be difficult for the Mexicans to drive the volunteers from this fort.[95]

Fannin at first was well supplied with provisions; but by the end of February they were getting scarce. On March 1, Fannin wrote that he had beef enough for twenty days, and hoped to have coffee, clothing, and some ammunition soon.[96] On March 2, John Sowers Brooks wrote: "We have nothing but fresh beef without salt—no bread for several days." Again on March 10 he wrote: "The Government furnishes us nothing,—not even ammunition."[97]

The trials and anxieties which Fannin experienced during this month were numerous, and the account of them forms the major part of his communications to the Governor and Council. In the first place, he had no little trouble in getting his men to do the work of strengthening the fort. This fact can hardly be attributed to lack of generalship on the part of Fannin, but is due rather to the independence of the volunteers, for records show that

[93]Accounts of Fannin (Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 209-213); Bernard (Wooten, editor, *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, II, 615); and Brooks (THE QUARTERLY, IX, 179-194).

[94]Fannin to Robinson, February 14, 1835. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 209.

[95]John Sowers Brooks to A. H. Brooks in THE QUARTERLY, IX, 194.

[96]Fannin to the Governor and Council, Foote, II, 216.

[97]John Sowers Brooks to Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Brooks, THE QUARTERLY, IX, 185, 195.

the volunteers were frequently unruly.[98] On February 22, Fannin however, reported that his soldiers were well disciplined and doing good work.[99]

This insubordination of his soldiers appears to have been but a beginning of the troubles which Fannin was to experience at Goliad. The Mexican spies were an especial worry to him. Indeed, at one time, he caused an "old Priest" and thirteen soldiers to be made prisoners,[100] preparatory to sending them to the seat of government.[1] The old priest, he said, had almost unbounded influence, and he declared that there was more danger from these spies than from twenty times the number of armed soldiers. The Mexican citizens of Goliad, though they professed to be in sympathy with the cause of the revolution, in reality aided the Mexicans. Afraid of compromising themselves too far, they left Goliad and moved to some ranches about fifteen miles away. Here they gave so much trouble that Bernard and a party were sent to investigate their conduct, but no evidence could be secured against them.[2] Concerning them the Council, in true American fashion, advised Fannin:[3]

> With regard to the settlers on the Nueces we think that, situated as they are . . . great allowance should be made for, and much lenity should be shown them by the Commander, but would advise that those that have been actively employed against us, and are proved to be enemies, should be sent to the seat of government to be disposed of as the government may think proper.

But the insubordination of his soldiers and the treachery of the Mexicans were trivialities in comparison with the morbid reflec-

[98]See Thrall, *Pictorial History of Texas*, 259; Linn, *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas*, 200.

[99]Fannin to the Governor and Council, Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 214.

[100]Fannin to Robinson, February 21, 1836. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 212-213.

[1]Only two were actually sent, the Padre Valdez and his nephew. Captain Cooke accompanied these to the seat of government, and later became Assistant Inspector General under Houston. Captain Cooke's Manuscript, *Lamar Papers*.

[2]Bernard in Wooten's *Comprehensive History of Texas*, I, 617. The party was in command of Major Mitchell. Bernard was one of the physicians saved from the massacre at Goliad. In 1875 he published an account of the Matamoros Expedition which Linn, John J., in *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas*, 148, declares to be the most correct and complete published.

[3]Letter of February 22. *Lamar Papers*.

tions to which Fannin himself became a prey. Almost from the time he reached Goliad, the helplessness of his situation seemed to have dawned on him; and his letters, though at times hopeful, containing plans of defence and reports of the Mexican approach, show in the main signs of discouragement, getting more and more desperate as the days went by. Brought face to face for the first time in his life with the problem of commanding soldiers, he realized his inability to do so.[4] He wished to know if his course were approved by the Governor and Council, thinking that in all probability he had erred because of inexperience. Though he recognized that he was a "better company officer than most men now in Texas and might do with Regulars, etc., for a Regiment," he declared that he was not qualified to command an army. For this reason he did not wish his name to be presented before the coming convention, but hoped to retire with the expiring Provisional Government. He also frequently expressed a desire to be permitted to rejoin his family, from whom he had been absent eighteen months. At one time, he declared that if General Houston would give up other considerations and devote himself entirely "to the military," he honestly believed that Houston would answer the present emergency.[5] At another time, he expressed a desire to see General Houston at the head of the army.[6] At still another time, however, he declared that he conscientiously believed that there were none fit for the office of commander in Texas.[7] Then he suggested his old plan of having the army officered by men from the United States. He advised the giving of the field offices to them at once, *"no matter who is left out."*

He entreated his countrymen to fly to arms; and proposed measures for the defence of Texas. For defending the country, he suggested the sending of 1,000 to 1,500 men both to Bexar and Goliad, 600 to 1,000 of this number to do fort duty and the others to do cavalry duty. He begged that they be organized before being sent, for he did not approve of elections in camp. The organization of the Reserve Army to be stationed on the Colorado and Guadalupe was specially urged, since if it were found advis-

[4]Letters of February 14 and February 22. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 206 and 214.

[5]Letter of February 14. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 206.

[6]Second letter of February 14. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 209.

[7]Letter of February 22. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 215.

able to fall back, a juncture might be effected, before cavalry and artillery, without much loss, and a stand made to check the further advance of the Mexicans; and again, because of his immense preparations, the enemy might purpose to pass around Goliad and Bexar and push the war into the heart of the country. After his attempt to carry aid to Travis in the Alamo and his determination to return to Goliad and make a stand there, he wrote the government:

In case immediate reinforcements are not sent to this place and Bexar, I would recommend that the Army of Reserve be concentrated near Gonzales and Victoria, for in that neighborhood must the enemy be met and driven back, if possible. We want your orders, and be assured, that they shall be obeyed to the letter.[8]

Fannin's position as defined by himself was a peculiar one. He said that during the General's furlough he knew that the command "naturally and of right" devolved on him, though he had not been officially notified of that fact either by the General or the Governor. The steps he had taken were those of prudence and for defence, allowable to a colonel of volunteers.[9] He begged for orders, and declared that he would obey even if sacrificed. On February 16, while suggesting steps for counteracting the Mexican advance, he asked permission either to take up his headquarters at Bexar, if General Houston did not return at the expiration of his furlough, or to be placed in the Reserve Army. Bexar, Guadalupe, and Colorado he considered the posts of danger and honor. On February 22, he declared that neither he nor the army had received information as to who should command the army during the absence of Houston. "It is my right," he says,

and in many respects, I have done so, when I was convinced the public weal required it. I well know that many men of influence view me with an envious eye, and either desire my situation or disgrace. The first they are welcome to—and many thanks for taking it off my hands. The second will be harder to effect. Will you allow me to say to you, and my friends of the old and new Convention, that I am not desirous of retaining the present, or receiving any other appointment in the army? I did not seek, in any manner, the one I now hold, and, you well know, had resolved

[8]Letter of February 29. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 226.
[9]Letter of February 14. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 209.

not to accept it—and but for Colonel Barnet and Clements, and Kerr, would have declined.[10]

On February 21, he wrote that he had no idea of retreating, nor ever had had; yet after Johnson's defeat he wrote at least two letters urging a retrograde movement.[11] He, however, did not feel himself qualified to order such a movement, but bound to maintain his present position till ordered to abandon it. On March 1, he wrote:

I again repeat to you, that I consider myself bound to await your orders. I can not, in a military point of view, be considered now as acting commander-in-chief, as I have never received orders to that effect, nor has the army. Again, I received furlough to the first of April. Again, I am chosen Commander of this Regiment of Volunteers. Lastly, I have orders from you not to make a retrograde movement,[12] but to wait orders and reinforcements.

He then urged that his stores on Matagorda Bay be protected, that his name be erased from the list of officers or expectants for office, and that leave be granted him to bring off his brave volunteers in the best manner he might be able.

Fannin was keenly disappointed at the apathy of the Texans. "If this apathy continues," he wrote February 14, "we can never hope long for the aid of the volunteers; and I am certain we will not be worthy of the protecting Aegis of the Gods, and if we lose them both, then, indeed, is our chance hopeless." There were few Texans among his troops, a situation which he early reported, but which he said was at first somewhat relieved by the hope of speedy action. The volunteers manifested a "willingness, nay anxiety," to meet the Mexicans, but they also looked to the Texans to turn out *en masse* to aid them. Though assuring his soldiers that the Texans would respond to his appeals for aid, and though grateful to the Governor and Council for the steps they had taken to get the militia into the field, yet Fannin declared that he was scepti-

[10]Letter of February 22. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 214.

[11]Letters of February 28 (Manuscript), *Lamar Papers*, and March 1, Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 216-18.

[12]Fannin felt that the order to retreat should come either from the commander-in-chief, or from the council under whose direction he had undertaken the expedition. At this time he refused to retreat, because he had been ordered by the Council to hold his position. Later, on receiving orders from Houston, he set about obeying them but was prevented by circumstances.

cal regarding aid and looked for no considerable force in the field till those there were either sacrificed or forced to retreat.[13] This opinion he voiced in several of his communications.

His indignation at the apathy of the Texans is characteristically expressed in a desperate letter which he wrote to one of his friends a few days before his capture.[14] He says:

> I have not as much confidence in the people of Texas as I once had. They have been called on and entreated to fly to arms and to prevent what has now been done. I have but three citizens in the ranks and tho' I have called on them for six weeks, not one arrived, and no assistance in bringing me provisions, even Texas refused me. I feel too indignant to say more about them. If I was honorably out of their service, I would never re-enter it. But I must now play a bold game. I will go the whole hog. If I am lost, be the censure on the right head, and may my wife and my children and children's children curse the sluggards forever.

On February 25, Fannin received information that the Mexican army under Santa Anna was in sight of San Antonio and preparing to attack the place.[15] There had evidently been some discussion among the volunteers at Goliad as to the desirability of retiring to San Antonio, for on February 21, Ward "gave it as his opinion"[16] that a portion of the forces at Goliad should be sent to Bexar, since, from the information received, the enemy's largest force would be directed against that place. That they did not go at the request of Travis is due primarily to the lack of transportation facilities, as well as to the rapid advance of Urrea and the terror inspired by his destruction of the forces of Johnson and Grant. On the 26th, the volunteers started, leaving only one company of regulars to guard the fort.[17] Oxen were used for drawing the baggage and artillery, since no broken horses could be obtained. In crossing the river, three of their wagons broke down, and it was with the "utmost labor and personal hazard" that their four

[13]Letter of February 21. Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 212.

[14]J. W. F. to Mr. Jos. Mims, February 28, 1836. *Lamar Papers.* This is the last of Fannin's letters in the *Lamar Papers.*

[15]John Sowers Brooks to Mary Ann Brooks, THE QUARTERLY, IX, 178.

[16]Letter of Ward's in *Lamar Papers.*

[17]John Sowers Brooks, THE QUARTERLY, IX, 183. Ayers in his *Journal* (*Lamar Papers*) says that all the force insisted upon going and that none would consent to stay "accept the regulars who wished to go but would obey orders under such circumstances."

cannon were conveyed across the river. The ammunition wagon was never brought across. Fannin's men were now in an embarrassing situation. To proceed, they would have to leave their luggage and artillery behind, and would have but little chance of obtaining provisions in the unsettled country between Goliad and San Antonio. Moreover, the evacuation of Goliad would leave the region from Bexar to the coast, as well as their own depots of supplies at "Dimmitt's Landing and Matagorda, perhaps all that were in Texas," exposed to the Mexicans. While debating on their situation, a messenger arrived telling them of the destruction of Johnson's forces, and they decided to return to Goliad and place the fort in a defensible condition.[18]

They now worked night and day getting ready for a Mexican attack; but for several days no information was received from the Mexicans.[19] Additional news was received meanwhile from Bexar, and John Sowers Brooks wrote:[20] "We will probably march tomorrow or the next day, if we can procure fresh oxen enough to transport our baggage and two six pounders." Two days later, however, they learned of the capture of Grant and his men; and though several letters were written from Goliad after this time, these contain no reference to the volunteers going to the relief of Bexar. Urrea recorded in his Diary,[21] however, that the Americans were trying to reach San Antonio and that he prepared to give them battle. Before leaving for San Antonio, Fannin sent the government a statement of his expenses for the month of February.[22] On the last sheet of his letter appears this statement:

[18]Account from the letters of John Sowers Brooks in THE QUARTERLY, IX, 178-94.

[19]The Mexicans were searching for Grant.

[20]March 2.

[21]Urrea, *Diario*, 10.

[22]The expense account referred to is not in Fannin's handwriting, though the final signature is. The account seems to ignore the January expenditures, which were nearly $2,000, and states the amount on hand to be $393.28. There is no record that Johnson ever accounted for any of the $2000 he received. Fannin, however, lists it as a part of his own expense. Allowing Fannin credit for this item, the amount on hand for February is approximately correct.

Following is the correspondence on the subject found in the *Lamar Papers:*

"Head Quarters Army of Texas.
"Fort Defiance Goliad Feby 25 1836

"To the Actg Gov & Council of the Provl. Govt. of Texas

"Herewith you have my account with the provisional Govt of expendi-

I am aware that my present move toward Bexar is any thing but a military one— The appeals of Cols Travis and Bowie cannot pass unnoticed—particularly by troops now in the field—sanguine, chivalrous volunteers— Much must be risked to relieve the be-

tures made under my authority as Agent. You also have a list of drafts drawn on the Pro. Govt. and a list of Receipts pd. sundry persons which will explain themselves. The sum of two hundred ten dollars paid H Foley will be charged to the Georgia Battalion of Volunteers (being for articles furnished them for private purposes to wit seventy gallons of Brandy) and will be deducted from their pay. . . .

"I have to remark in reference to the amt of two thousand (2000) dollars received from Gay by Col J W Johnson that before accepting the appointment of Agent by Col J he received the amount ($2000) in the presence of Col. Wm Pettus & Thomas F. McKinney for which he has not accounted to me or furnished a voucher as evidence of expenditures.

"I send also the account of Capt Jack Shackleford of the Red Rovers for settlement.

"Very Respectfully
"Your obet servt
"J W Fannin Jr
"Col comt Army Texas & Agt Provl Govt

"P. S. I enclose duplicates of drafts drawn—vouchers &c with the exception of a few expenditures made for the public service in expresses, &c.

"J. W F

[These duplicates are mainly illegible but in so far as they can be made out are correct.]

The Provisional Government of Texas in account with
Col J. W. Fannin Jr. Agent

"Cr.

By cash received of McKinney & Williams on Dft. drawn by Genl Council dated 23d Jany 1836 ..... $3000

Dr

| 1836 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| February | 3 | To Cash paid Capt Appleman for freight goods seized, a list of which has been sent to the Council | $ 42.00 |
| | | To DO paid pilot for Schr Columbus to be deducted from Draft on Prov. Govt | 50.00 |
| | 8 | " Do paid Capt. Tarleton as per rect | 4.00 |
| | 9 | " Do paid A. Sayle rep. of rifles | 3.50 |
| | 14 | " Do paid for forty bushels as per rect of F Flores | 35.00 |
| | | " Do paid Ignacio Castro for [illegible] | 8.00 |
| | | " Do paid I. R. Foster to bear express | 3.00 |
| | | " Do paid for express to San Patricio | 2.00 |
| | 20 | " Do paid expenses of expedition to the Ranchos on San Antonio under Maj. Mitchell | 3.00 |
| | 23 | " Do paid W. G. Cooke Capt | 10.00 |
| | | " Do paid D. N. Burke " | 10.00 |
| | | " Do paid G. F. Leonard of Grays | 20.00 |
| | | " Do paid Capt Tarleton for express | 10.00 |
| | | " Do paid Maj. Bennet for public service | 3.00 |
| | | " Do E. McDonough for Corn | 62.50 |

sieged. If however I hear of the fall of Bexar before I reach there I shall retire on this place and complete the fortifications now in a state of forwardness and prepare for a vigorous defence, waiting anxiously in *any event* for the arrival of reinforcements from the Interior.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | " Do B. C. Wallace as pr. a/c rect | 4.50 |
| | " Do paid by Gay to F. W. Johnson to be deducted from Dft of $3000 | 2000.00 |
| | " Do paid Col Johnson at Refugio | 10.00 |
| | " Do paid Foley as pr. acct. and receipt | 200.00 |
| To cash paid Lopez for silk, etc | | 11.12 |
| " Do for Rifle for Ball of Duvall's Compy | | 15.00 |
| " Do paid W. A. Simpson of Wyatts Company | | 15.00 |
| " Do paid for 276 pds. Tobacco for Volunteers as per a/c and rect. | | 105.60 |
| " Do paid for one Ream letter paper quills and ink | | 7.50 |
| Balance Cash on hand | | 393.28 |
| | | $3000.00 |
| Feby 25 By Balance Cash remains in my hands | | 393.28 |

E & O E—[Errors and omissions excepted]

J. W. Fannin Jr.
Col Comt Artly and Agt. Provl. Govt.

Goliad, February 25, 1836

The Government of Texas in Acct with Jack Shackleford Captain of the Red Rovers from Alabama

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1835 | | |
| December | To Amt passage for volunteers from Tuscumbia to Paduca in the steamboat William Penn (Capt Bradford) | 47.00 |
| | To Amt paid [illegible] to Orleans on board the Kentuckian (Capt Dawson) | 278.00 |
| | To Amt pd in Tuscumbia for provisions &c | 75.00 |
| | To do in Paducah | 25.00 |
| | To do in New Orleans and on the way down | 102.00 |
| 1836 | | |
| Jany | To Amt pd Passage for self on Board Brutus | 20.00 |
| | To do for provisions upon Brutus | 50.00 |
| | To Amt paid for Tents and Camp equipage | 60.00 |
| | To Paid in Texas for provisions &c | 25.00 |
| | To paid State of Alabama for 50 muskets and accoutrements | 600.00 |
| | To set of Amputating instruments and box medicine | 30.00 |
| | 1 Box [illegible] 1 small do | 12.00 |
| | | 1254.00 |

I certify on honor that the above acct. is correct and that the sum charged is below the actual sum paid out—many of the vouchers were deducted in [illegible] was stolen from board the Brutus. Forty of the muskets were brought to Goliad.

Jack Shackleford,
Cap. Red Rovers from Ala.

Approved and recommended for payt.
25th Feby 1836

J. W. Fannin Jr
Col Comg & Agt Provl Govt.

I leave from 80 to 100 men for the present defence of this place with the expectation of a speedy reinforcement from Matagorda.

Such was the hopeless situation of Fannin at the end of the second month. His expedition had accomplished nothing; his expenses were far in excess of what had been allowed him; and his supplies were exhausted. His "advance division" had been completely destroyed; and with his present facilities and with the large Mexican force watching him, it was impossible for him to carry aid to his comrades besieged in the Alamo. Since he was determined not to retreat on his own initiative, there was nothing left for him to do but make the best of a bad matter. Extracts from a letter[23] of John Sowers Brooks written on March 9, pretty well sum up the situation of the volunteers at the end of the second month:

The Mexicans, to the number of 700, are now in San Patricio, about 60 miles in front of our position; and another party of 200 have been discovered within 18 miles of us, between us and Gonzales. Every thing indicates that an attack will be speedily made upon us. Their scouts, well mounted, frequently push up to our walls, and from the want of horses, we are unable to punish them. . . .

We have had no bread for several days. I am nearly naked, without shoes, and without money. We suffer much, and as soon as Bexar falls, we will be surrounded by 6000 infernal Mexicans. But we are resolved to die under the walls rather than surrender. . . .

Independence has probably been declared. We are in a critical situation. I will die like a soldier.

(*Continued.*)

[23]Brooks to Hagerty, THE QUARTERLY, IX, 190-92.